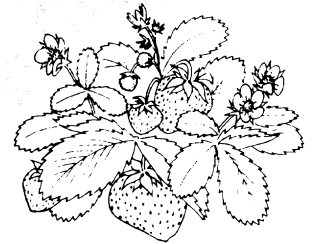


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It's STRAWBERRY TIME



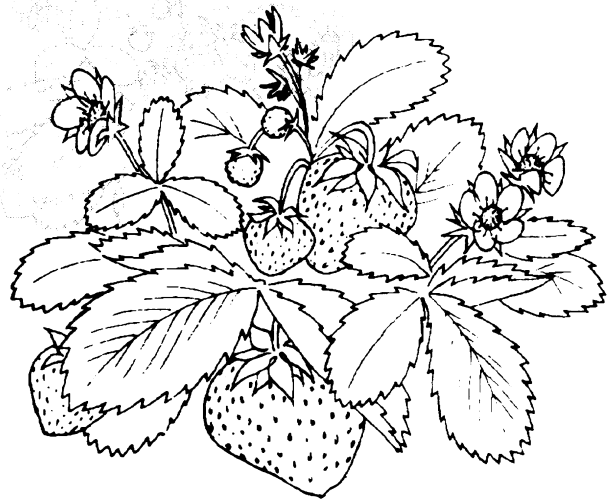
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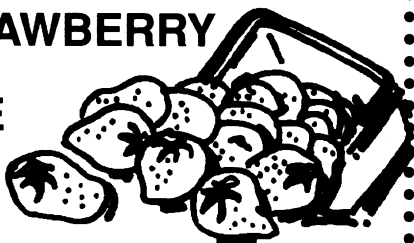
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It's STRAWBERRY TIME



Springtime is strawberry time in Louisiana! Serve luscious Louisiana berries fresh at breakfast, lunch or dinner, and freeze some for wintertime enjoyment. The strawberry season depends a lot on the weather, but in Louisiana the season usually lasts from early March to the middle of May. In recent years, however, some farmers have had fresh berries as early as January or February. Most of the Louisiana strawberries are produced in Livingston and Tangipahoa parishes, although they are grown commercially in nine parishes.

Strawberry farmers usually open their fields to "pick-your-own" about the first of May. This is a great family activity, and you can pick large amounts of berries at a bargain price for freezing and making into preserves, jam and jelly.

VITAMIN-RICH

Fresh or frozen, strawberries are low in calories and an excellent source of vitamin C, or ascorbic acid, the water-soluble vitamin we hear a lot about these days. Vitamin C is an essential vitamin which helps keep our blood vessels, bones and teeth healthy. In addition, it is also a powerful antioxidant and may help prevent certain cancers as well as heart disease.

One cup of whole strawberries provides more than one and a half times the recommended daily allowance for vitamin C, yet only 45 calories. They are rich in dietary fiber and

make important contributions of iron and the B-vitamins, riboflavin, niacin and folacin.

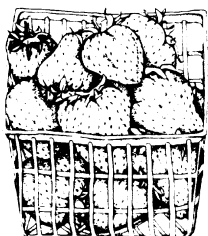
BUYING GUIDE

Strawberries don't ripen after picking, so choose firm, ripe strawberries with a solid red color, bright luster and bright green caps attached. There should be no moisture, mold or decayed spots. Mold spreads quickly from one berry to another.

If the container has red stains, the berries may be overripe or have been crushed.

The flavor depends on variety and ripeness, not on size.

HOW MUCH TO BUY



1 quart fresh berries = about 3 1/4 cups whole berries, or 2 1/4 cups sliced berries, or 2 cups crushed fruit.

1 10-ounce package of frozen, sliced berries = 2 (1/2 cup) servings

2 quarts of fresh berries will make about 8 half-pint jars (8 cups) of jam made with pectin

1 quart prepared fruit will make about 3 half-pint jars of preserves

PROPER CARE AND PREPARATION

Make strawberries your last purchase at the store or roadside market.

Hurry home with the strawberries.

Sort for damaged or decayed berries.

Spread in flat container, cover loosely and refrigerate unwashed until ready to use.

Wash berries just before eating.

Wash gently and quickly in a pan of cold water.

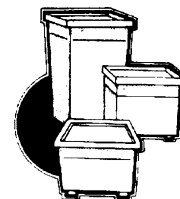
Lift berries from the water, letting the sand and dirt stay in the pan. Repeat two or three times in clean water. Remove caps after the berries are washed and drained.

FREEZING

Freezing is the easiest and best way to maintain nutritional quality and to keep the berries tasting like fresh from season to season. To retain the high quality of the berries, use recommended freezing methods and moisture-vapor-proof freezing bags or containers.



Berries freeze well with or without sugar, but texture, color and flavor are better when sugar is used. If you want to make preserves or jam later, or if you're limiting your sugar intake, freeze berries without sugar.



Select firm, ripe fruit. Wash berries a few at a time in cold water, lifting fruit out of the water. Repeat two or three times until water is clean. Drain. Never leave berries soaking in water. Remove caps. Use whole or sliced, but the texture of sliced berries is best because they are more easily served with ice crystals.

WITH SUGAR:

Sprinkle sugar over berries. Use 1/2 to 3/4 cup sugar to 4 or 5 cups sliced berries, depending on tartness of berries and your taste preference.



Turn berries gently with a large spoon until all are coated with sugar. Let them set 5-10 minutes to make their own juice. One teaspoon of commercial ascorbic acid mixture stirred into sugar will help protect bright red color and vitamin C.

Pack berries in moisture-vapor-proof bags or containers. Fill containers leaving 1/2-inch of space at top. If a rigid container is used, place a small piece of crumpled waxed paper or freezer paper on top to hold berries under the juice. Seal airtight and label. Freeze quickly at 0 degrees F.

WITHOUT SUGAR:

To freeze whole berries without sugar, place in single layer on a tray or baking pan, cover lightly and freeze quickly until firm. Remove from pan, and package airtight in moisture-vapor-proof containers or bags. If they are to be used for preserves or jam, measure and bag before freezing.

WITH ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER:


Berries can be frozen successfully with artificial sweetener. Follow package instructions for the equivalent amount of sugar; for example, six individual packets of saccharin are about the sweetening equivalent of 1/2 cup of sugar per quart (4 cups) of sliced berries. It takes about nine packets of NutraSweet, however, to give sweetness equivalent to that amount of sugar or saccharin.

Mix 1/2 teaspoon of a commercial ascorbic acid freezing mixture with the sweetener and 2 teaspoons water and stir into each quart of berries. Package in moisture-vapor-proof containers or bags.

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FRESH BERRY PRESERVES

Fresh strawberries make clear, bright, tender preserves that retain their whole-berry shape.



2 pints prepared strawberries

4 cups sugar (3 cups sugar work well; product less sweet)

Wash berries in cold water. Remove caps and place in colander. Pour a half gallon of

boiling water over berries. Immediately put drained berries in a deep heavy pot, add 2 cups sugar, stir gently and bring slowly to a full rolling boil. Boil 4 minutes. Take off heat, add remaining sugar, shake pot or stir gently to dissolve sugar. Bring again to full rolling boil and boil 3 minutes. Skim with a metal spoon. Cover and leave at room temperature for 12-24 hours to plump. Shake pan gently several times as preserves cool. (See note below.) Carefully pack whole berry preserves and syrup in clean jars, packing tightly. Leave 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe sealing edge with a damp cloth. Cover jars with new lids prepared according to manufacturer's instructions and screw on bands. Process in boiling water bath at simmering temperature for 20 minutes. (This step is necessary for the jars to seal because the plumped preserves are cold.) Remove immediately from water. Cool on folded towel. Follow timing directions carefully. Don't overcook! Don't double-batch. Cooking times won't be the same. Store in a cool, dark place to protect color from fading. Make about 3 half-pints.

Note: If you prefer not to plump, pour boiling preserves into hot sterilized jars and seal. Invert until all are filled, then set upright. Process in boiling water bath for 5 minutes.

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FROZEN BERRY PRESERVES

If you're pressed for time, you can freeze whole, unsweetened berries and use them later for making high quality preserves. The color of preserves from frozen berries may be a little darker and they may not hold their shape as well, but the taste will be just as good.

Put about 2 pints of frozen berries in a big kettle, add 2 cups sugar and heat gradually over low heat until berries thaw and sugar dissolves. Gently separate berries; do not stir. Heat to boiling; boil hard 4 minutes. Remove from heat, add remaining sugar and shake pot or stir gently to dissolve. Bring again to full rolling boil and boil 3 minutes. Remove from heat and skim off

foam with metal spoon. At this point, preserves can either be plumped or processed immediately. See instructions under Fresh Berry Preserves.

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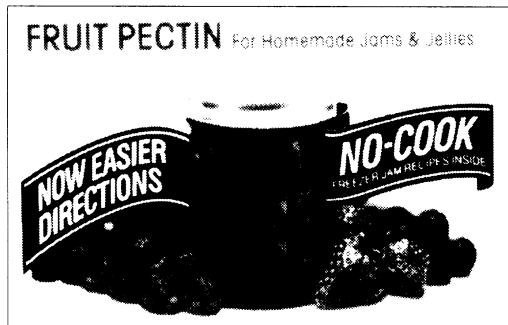
NO-COOK FREEZER STRAWBERRY JAM*

- 2 cups mashed, fully ripe strawberries (about 1 quart)
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (optional)
- 1 box powdered fruit pectin
- 3/4 cup water

Wash and drain fully ripe berries. Remove caps and crush thoroughly. (A potato masher works well.) Measure 2 cups into a large bowl. If necessary, add a little water for exact amount. Mix sugar into fruit; add lemon juice if used. Let stand 10 minutes.

Mix powdered pectin and water in small saucepan. Bring to a boil and boil 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir all at once into fruit-sugar mixture. Continue stirring for 3 minutes. Ladle or pour quickly into clean, scalded freezer containers (rigid plastic or glass) with tight-fitting lids. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours to set. Store in refrigerator for up to three weeks, or freeze for long-term storage. Makes a bright red, fresh-tasting jam--an excellent topping for ice cream, too. Makes about 5 1/2 cups.

***Note:** For cooked jam, follow instructions given with commercial powdered pectin.



LOUISIANA STRAWBERRY SALAD (OR DESSERT)

- 3 3-oz. pkgs. strawberry gelatin (for diabetics, use sugar-free gelatin)
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 16-oz. pkg. sweetened, sliced frozen strawberries or
- 3 cups sliced fresh berries with 1/4 cup sugar (about 2 pints whole berries)
- 1 20-oz. can crushed pineapple in own juice (about 2 cups)
- 2 or 3 bananas
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Stir in frozen strawberries, pineapple and juice. If using fresh berries, slice, add 1/4 cup sugar, let sit for 10 minutes to make juice before adding to gelatin. Place in refrigerator to thicken slightly. Fold in sliced bananas and nuts. Pour into lightly oiled or sprayed mold or pan. Chill until set. Spread cream cheese dressing (recipe below) on top, or serve separately. Pretty if cut in squares and served on lettuce leaf. About 20 servings.

Each serving (with pecans) provides 125 calories, 25.8 g carbohydrate, 2 g fat, 20 g sugar, 2.4 g dietary fiber and 13.7 mg vitamin C.

Cream Cheese Dressing (To lower fat, use ingredients in parentheses)

- 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened at room temperature (Use fat-free cream cheese instead)
- 1 cup sour cream (Use 3/4 cup lowfat plain yogurt or 1 cup nonfat sour cream instead)
- 1/4 cup sugar (Use 3 or 4 pkgs. artificial sweetener or to taste)

1 teaspoon vanilla (Use 1/2 teaspoon vanilla)
Whip cream cheese until fluffy. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. (Use fat-free cream cheese softened at room temperature and nonfat plain yogurt, or nonfat sour cream to cut down on fat.) About 20 servings.

With full-fat ingredients, each serving provides 74 calories, 6.4 g total fat (4 g saturated fat) and 17.6 mg cholesterol.

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CREAMY STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM

(One Gallon)

1 quart mashed fresh strawberries*

2 1/2 to 2 3/4 cups sugar

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons cornstarch

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 quart milk, scalded

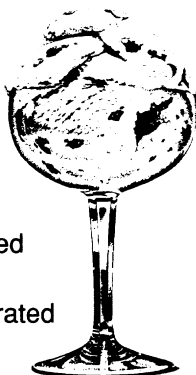
4 eggs, beaten

1 can sweetened condensed milk**

1 large can (13 oz.) evaporated milk**

2 teaspoons vanilla

More lowfat milk if needed



Mash and measure strawberries; add 1/2 cup sugar and lemon juice. Let stand a few minutes; mix in blender if available.

Mix remaining sugar, cornstarch and salt in top of double boiler. Slowly stir in scalded milk; mix until smooth. Place over boiling water and cook about 5 minutes, stirring often. Stir a small amount of hot liquid into beaten eggs; mix well and add slowly back to hot mixture, stirring constantly. Cook 2 or 3 minutes to make a thin custard, stirring often. Pour custard through a sieve into a large container. Mix in canned milks, strawberries and vanilla. Add more milk if needed to fill freezer bucket to fill line. Freeze. Serves 16.

Each serving provides 324 calories, 6.6 g protein, 63.7 g carbohydrate, 6.4 g total fat (3.5 g saturated fat), 73 mg cholesterol, 5 g dietary fiber, 28.4 mg vitamin C and 187 mg calcium.

***Note:** Two 16-ounce cartons of frozen, sliced berries may be substituted for fresh berries.

****Try the new lowfat condensed milk and evaporated skim milk.**

STRAWBERRY PARTY PUNCH

1 16-oz. pkg. sweetened, sliced, frozen strawberries

2 6-oz. cans frozen pink lemonade concentrate, undiluted

1 8-oz. can crushed pineapple*

2 quarts ginger ale, chilled

Mix strawberries, frozen lemonade and pineapple in blender. Store in refrigerator. When ready to serve, pour into punch bowl, add ginger ale and mix well. Punch concentrate may also be frozen before adding ginger ale. Serves 40.

Each serving provides 52 calories, 13.5 g carbohydrate, 10.9 g sugar, 8.4 mg vitamin C.

***Note:** When making large quantities, use a 20-oz. can crushed pineapple for each two recipes.

STRAWBERRY CREAM CHEESE PIE (REDUCED FAT)

*1 graham cracker crust

1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese (fat-free)

1 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk (use low-fat)

1/3 cup fresh or bottled lemon juice

1/2 tsp. vanilla

Garnish with fresh strawberries or strawberry glaze

Let cream cheese soften; whip until fluffy. Gradually add condensed milk, beating until well blended. Stir in lemon juice and vanilla. Pour into a prepared graham cracker crust. Chill before serving. Makes 8 small servings.

***Make graham cracker crust using 1 cup crumbs, 1 T. sugar, 2 T. lower fat margarine, melted. Press into lightly greased 9-inch pie pan. Bake 5 minutes at 375 degrees F. Cool.**

Each serving contains: 250 calories; 4.5 g fat, 11 mg cholesterol; 310 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrates.